AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A spark plug comprising:

a metal shell;

a center electrode retained within said metal shell to be insulated from said metal shell, said center electrode having a given length and a tip projecting from said metal shell; and

a ground electrode including a noble metal-made tip and a body, the body being joined to said metal shell outside said center electrode in a lateral direction of the spark plug, the noble metal-made tip being connected to the body through a fused portion formed by materials of the body and the noble metal-made tip melted together and extending toward said center electrode to define a spark gap between the noble metal-made tip and said center electrode,

wherein if a portion of the noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode closest to the tip of said center electrode is defined as a ground electrode tip, and a portion of the fused portion closest to the tip of said center electrode is defined as a fused portion tip, said ground electrode tip and said fused portion tip are located within a range defined by a first line extending from a top end surface of the tip of said center electrode in a lateral direction of said center electrode and a second line extending from a portion of said center electrode closest to said ground electrode in a longitudinal direction parallel to a longitudinal center line of said center electrode so that said ground electrode tip and said fused portion tip do not overlap with the tip of said center electrode both in the lateral direction and in the longitudinal direction of said center electrode.

2. (original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein a minimum distance between the fused portion tip and the tip of said center electrode is greater than the spark gap by 0.2mm or more.

3. (original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein the noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode is made of a cylindrical member which has a diameter of 0.4mm to 0.8mm.

4. (original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein said noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode has a length projecting the fused portion, the length being between 0.3mm and 1.0mm.

5. (currently amended) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein the body of said ground electrode has a first portion and a second portion, the first portion being joined to ~~same~~ said metal shell, the second portion extending from the first portion toward the longitudinal center line of said center electrode, a longitudinal center line of the second portion extending parallel to a longitudinal center line of the noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode.

6. (original) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein the noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode is made of one of an Ir alloy and a Pt alloy.

7. (new) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein an entirety of said noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode is located within said range.

8. (new) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein said fused portion is disposed entirely within said range.

9. (new) A spark plug as set forth in claim 1, wherein the body of said ground electrode has a first portion and a second portion, the first portion being joined to said metal shell, the second portion extending from the first portion toward the longitudinal centerline of said center electrode, a longitudinal center line of the second portion being

substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal center line of said center electrode.

10. (new) A spark plug as set forth in claim 9, wherein the longitudinal center line of the second portion extends in parallel to a longitudinal center line of the noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode.

11. (new) A spark plug as set forth in claim 9, wherein an entirety of said noble metal-made tip of said ground electrode is located within said range.

12. (new) A spark plug as set forth in claim 9, wherein said fused portion is disposed entirely within said range.